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EAST EUROPE BRANCH NOTES 13 Feb. 1974

East European Reaction to Washington Energy Conference

East European media coverage of the Washington Energy Conference has thus far been limited and, with the expected exception of Albania, only mildly critical. This temperate attitude may reflect the realization that differences between oil producers and consumers must be resolved.

Predictable Yugoslav criticism was relatively restrained and non-specific, which is in line with Belgrade's recent efforts to dampen anti-US polemics. Most Yugoslav coverage dismissed the conference as a restricted "club of the rich." One editorial concluded that this "club" undoubtedly wanted to set up a monopoly that would transfer the economic burden to other countries and thus would only deepen the crisis.

A Czechoslovak article asserts that the conference started in the "shadow of the gloomy cloud of diplomatic failure." Prague also dryly notes that the US would like to set the tone for others, even though it receives only ten percent of its oil from the Middle East. A Hungarian commentator factually reports some of the differences that have appeared at the talks and opines that President Nixon's failure to appear at the conference shows that little remains of the original concept. A Polish commentary hinted that not all the differences between the participants would become evident in public.

YUGOSLAVIA

Belgrade Temporizes on World Communist Conference

Belgrade continues to oppose the convocation of a world Communist conference in the near future. In a January 27 interview with Milan's highly regarded newspaper, Corriere della Serra, Todo Kurtovic, member of the LCY Executive Bureau,

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stated that at present "conditions do not exist today for a world Communist conference." He indicated that Belgrade's decision on its attendance at a world meeting would not be made until plans for the conference had been formalized.

Kutovic said that the conference must focus on "what unites us and not what divides us." This is an obvious allusion to the Chinese question and betrays Belgrade's considerable concern that Moscow will try to use the conference to purge Peking from the world Communist movement. Yugoslav officials have no desire to be drawn into the inevitable polemics.

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POLAND

White Slavers Brought to Bar of Justice

The trial of two West Germans accused of attempting to recruit Polish girls for immoral purposes began on February 12. Wielding the lure of good-paying jobs in a Persian Gulf sheikdom, the defendants reportedly managed to sign up one applicant. She later saw the light, however, and returned home to testify. As in the Stefan Batory refugee case, this trial is unlikely to mar current Bonn-Warsaw negotiations. It may, however, provide some solace to Polish authorities who likely are still fretting over the mass escape from the Batory.

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